

COMMISSION ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING

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OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

96-9611

Date: June 10, 1996

To: All Individuals and Groups Interested in Evaluating Foreign Transcripts

From: Sam Swofford, Ed.D., Executive Director

Subject: Criteria for Agencies Seeking Approval to Review Foreign Academic Programs for Equivalency to United States Standards

The Commission is responsible for evaluating California credential requirements based on educational programs and degrees obtained from colleges and universities located not only in other states but also in countries outside of the United States. Because the Commission does not have the staff, training, or other resources necessary, those candidates trained in countries other than the United States need to seek an outside determination of course work and degree equivalency to U.S. standards. The Commission would like to broaden the list of approved evaluating agencies to allow candidates more options and, in some cases, not force the candidate to duplicate a service already performed by another evaluating agency of equal status.

If you feel your agency meets the criteria set forth in this document, you will need to submit complete verification of this to the Commission by **September 13, 1996**. The Commission will reply regarding their determination within six to eight weeks after the cut-off date.

If you do not perform these services or are not interested in seeking approval but know of an agency that might, please forward this correspondence to them. They may also obtain a copy by contacting the Commission. If there are any questions regarding the criteria or procedure, please contact Yvonne Novelli at (916) 445-5865.

Return your responses to:

Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1812 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-7000
Att.: Yvonne Novelli

**CRITERIA FOR AGENCIES SEEKING APPROVAL
TO REVIEW FOREIGN ACADEMIC PROGRAMS FOR
EQUIVALENCY TO UNITED STATES STANDARDS,
January 1, 1996 Edition**

The Commission on Teacher Credentialing will use the following criteria for evaluating agencies seeking approval to review foreign academic programs for equivalency to United States standards.

Schedule for the Evaluation of Agencies

The Commission will notify institutions of higher education with Commission-approved education programs, California county superintendent of schools, and other interested agencies known to the Commission of the beginning and ending dates during which evaluating agencies may submit responses to the criteria listed in this document. The beginning and ending dates will encompass three months and be offered no more than once a year. The Commission will review the submitted responses for completeness and notify the evaluating agency of any materials lacking within two to three weeks after the ending date. The evaluating agency will have one week from the date of notification of incompleteness in which to respond. The Commission will determine approval or disapproval of the responses and notify those agencies that requested approval within six to eight weeks after the ending date.

Countries Evaluated

An agency may be approved to evaluate collegiate programs from one or more foreign countries. If the agency does not evaluate programs from all foreign countries, the specific countries evaluated must be listed in the response. An approved agency will be responsible for notifying the Commission of any change in the countries evaluated at least 40 days prior to implementing the change.

Financial Compensation to Approved Agencies

There will be no compensation paid to an approved agency by the Commission. Fee arrangements must be made between the agency and individual applicants.

Responsibilities of Approved Agencies

Each approved agency will be expected to send a representative to the Commission to receive training on California credential requirements so the agency will be able to provide the needed information. The individual agency will assume the costs incurred by their staff for this. Each agency will also provide a contact person as a liaison with whom Commission staff can clarify specific procedures or concerns.

The Commission's Responsibility to Approved Agencies

If the approved agency fails to meet the conditions stated in the agency's approved proposals, the Commission will remove the name of the agency from its approved list. The Commission will have no involvement with the administration of any approved agency or any legal authority over the approved agency. The Commission will not become involved with any dispute between the individual and the agency regarding any aspect of the evaluation. The Commission reserves the right to accept or reject an approved agency's determination. The Commission will review approved agencies every five years, beginning 5 years from the approval date, or sooner if substantiated complaints are received.

Grading Structure

The agency seeking approval must respond to each area under all four sections. The agency must give clear, concise, and complete information, including the name of a

contact person and her or his direct phone number in case there are any questions. The agency must also include a copy of the application form that the foreign-trained individual would complete to initiate an evaluation.

Each of the thirteen criteria in Section I must be successfully verified. The agency's responses will be assessed on a point system in Sections II, III and IV. Points will be given for each criterion listed. The maximum points available for the individual criterion is listed in parentheses at the end of each criterion.

The maximum points available for Sections II, III and IV are 150. Seventy percent (70%) of the total must be obtained for approval. If an agency does not perform the services listed in criteria 6 and/or 7 in Section II, then the points for that criterion or criteria will be deducted from the total and 70% of the remainder will be required for approval.

An agency's response will be reviewed individually by two outside readers who will be chosen based on their background in reviewing foreign transcripts, and who have at least five years experience reviewing foreign transcripts, and are either currently or previously employed as a foreign evaluator at an institution of higher education that has a Commission approved program. In case of discrepancies, a third reader will be used. The agencies that are denied will be sent a response listing the panel's concerns. The denied agency may request a re-evaluation if the request is submitted to the Commission within one month of the Commission's mailing of the denial letter. The request must be made on the grounds of mistake of fact or clarifying information not included in the original application.

SECTION I: Preconditions

1. The evaluating staff has knowledge of both the present and historical educational system offered by the country(s) they are responsible to evaluate. The knowledge covers the course work, programs, degrees, grading system, and unit value, as it equates to United States standards. The agency will submit biographical information on the staff, including the director and supervisors of the evaluating staff, as it applies to the above. The minimum employment qualifications used for hiring new personnel will also be submitted.
2. In-depth staff development occurs on a regular and frequent basis. A copy of the training procedure, including biographical information on the trainers and frequency of training sessions, will be submitted. Samples of handouts or memos from prior staff development sessions will also be submitted. If staff was sent to other countries for training, the agency will submit a statement listing dates sent, length of stay, and agencies contacted, i.e., ministry of education, universities, and so forth.
3. Complete set of historical and current reference materials needed for evaluations are available to determine if the foreign colleges and universities are of equivalent stature to regionally accredited institutions in the United States and to equate foreign grading systems and unit values to United States standards. The agency will submit a list of these materials, including edition dates, and, if they are not located on-site, will indicate where they are located.
4. The current evaluation criteria established by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) or other authorities of comparable status is used when determining equivalency. The agency will submit a list of the associations and organizations whose standards it follows when evaluating.

5. The evaluating staff's work is periodically reviewed by other knowledgeable staff members to maintain consistency and accuracy. The agency will submit the policy and procedure as it applies to the above, including the frequency of the review.
6. Translations of transcripts and documents into English are only accepted from knowledgeable individuals. The agency will submit a list of the authority's profession, for example: Dean of the Italian Department at the University of California at Berkeley. If the authority is not in a related profession or if the agency's staff is responsible for translating, the agency will submit biographical information as it applies to the above.
7. Evaluations are made based on original, official transcripts and degrees. The agency will submit a copy of the policy regarding this. If anything other than original documentation is accepted, the agency will submit a copy of the policy and reason(s) for this policy.
8. If the foreign-trained individual disagrees with the evaluation, there is an established method by which he or she may appeal the decision to the evaluating agency. The agency will submit a copy of the appeal procedure.
9. The fee schedule required to determine degree equivalency, including course-by-course breakdown with academic grades, units, and level of course, will be included with the above costs highlighted.
10. On the foreign-trained individual's evaluation letter, the agency will list degree titles equivalent to those offered in the United States. The degree information will also include major and minor (if given), the date the degree was granted, and the institution that granted the degree. The degree title and institution name will be listed in the language of the foreign country. The institutions location including the city, country, and, if needed for identification, state or province is also noted.
11. On the foreign-trained individual's evaluation letter, the agency will include a course-by-course breakdown of the college program. The following information will be given.
 - a. English translation of course title,
 - b. completion date of course,
 - c. traditional letter grade (A-F),
 - d. semester unit equivalence, and
 - e. institution offering course.
12. The foreign-trained individual's privacy is respected. The agency will submit a copy of its policy that insures this.
13. A copy of the evaluation letter is retained by the agency, and duplicates of the letter are available. The agency will submit a copy of its policy regarding the above, including the length of retention.
14. The foreign evaluating agency views the quality and scope of the degree programs, as opposed to only the length, when determining the degree equivalency to those offered in the United States. A statement of the agency's philosophy regarding this will be included.

SECTION II: Quality Control

1. A system to communicate with evaluators of foreign programs at other agencies and institutions has been established. The agency will submit a list of the organizations, agencies, and professional titles of any individuals who are part of this system. (25)
2. An individual will receive a response in a timely manner. The agency will submit a statement giving the current average time it takes to respond to an applicant, the fastest and slowest time during the last year, and the reasons for the slowest. (10)
3. The evaluating agency has been in service at least five years prior to applying for approval. The agency will submit copies of its business license. (30 @ 6 points per year up to 5 years)
4. The agency will submit at least three letters of reference from public or private agencies that have used their services. The agency will also list any organization with which it is affiliated or by which it is accredited. Also, the agency will provide the number of applications processed annually for the last five years. (25)
5. The materials upon which the evaluation is based are retained for an established length of time in case the Commission or others question the determination. The agency will submit a copy of the policy regarding the above including a list of the materials saved and the site of the retention. (10)
6. If transcripts are unavailable due to a natural disaster, political upheaval, or the closing of the institution, there is an established procedure for assisting the individual. The fact that documents were unavailable is noted on the evaluation letter. The agency will submit a copy of the procedure for the above. (10)
7. The agency will evaluate inservice programs sponsored by non-collegiate organizations such as the state-approved second examination for teachers from what was the Federal Republic of Germany. The agency will submit its policy regarding the evaluation of these programs and an example of the wording used confirming the program on the individual's evaluation letter. (10)

SECTION III: Support Staff

1. There are adequate evaluators and secretarial support staff available. The agency will submit a list giving the total number of staff members with a breakdown listing the number of evaluators, secretaries, and telephone operators. If the evaluators are also responsible for typing and answering the telephones, this will be indicated. The agency will submit the ratio of the evaluators and the ratio of secretarial support staff to the number of applications processed annually. (10)

SECTION IV: Evaluation Letter

1. The information on the evaluation letter is clear, concise, and in a format that is easy to understand. The evaluation letter lists the current name of the credential candidate plus any former name under which the course work was taken. The agency will submit copies of three actual cases which include teacher preparation programs. Each case will contain photocopies of the foreign transcripts, any translation used, the resulting evaluation letter, and a list of specific references used for the evaluation. If the agency evaluates individuals

from three or more countries, it will submit the requested information from three different countries. If the agency evaluates individuals from only two countries, it will submit the requested information from three different institutions, one from one country and two from the other. If the agency evaluates individuals from only one country, it will submit the requested information from three different institutions within that country. (20)